מִן־הָעוֹלָם עַד־הָעוֹלָם

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Our sentence consists of two occurrences of הָעוֹלָם, each of which is preceded by a different preposition: מִן, "from," and עַד, "unto, until, to."

הָעוֹלָם consists of the noun עוֹלָם, "eternity, long time," and the definite article.

SEMANTICS

עוֹלָם can be either a noun meaning "eternity, long time" or an adverb meaning "forever, a long time ago." It is appropriate to speak of it as a noun in our present text because it is articular.

MORPHOLOGY

The Ayin of עוֹלָם, since it is a guttural, rejects the Daghesh Forte of the preceding definite article. For this reason the Pathach of the article lengthens to Qamets (see further our discussion of p. 27, ex 2).

MORPHOLOGY

Because מִן and עַד are joined to הָעוֹלָם each by means of a maqqef, מִן־הָעוֹלָם is treated as one accentual unit and עַד־הָעוֹלָם is treated as one accentual unit.

Now that מִן and עַד are joined via a maqqef to the word which follows them, they are both closed unaccented syllables (remember that this kind of syllable always takes a short vowel). Since מִן and עַד already have short vowels, their vowels remain the same; had their vowels been changeable long, however, they would have become short.

Excursus: Translation

If we translate the phrase מִן־הָעוֹלָם עַד־הָעוֹלָם in a woodenly literalistic fashion, we might render it as *from the eternity unto the eternity (or, from forever unto forever)*. By including the article "the" here, we have come up with some pretty poor English! Let's figure out how we might render this stylistically good Hebrew into stylistically good English.

מִן־הָעוֹלָם עַד־הָעוֹלָם is roughly equivalent to our English expression *forever and ever* (this has been the choice of many translators of this verse). The translations *from everlasting to everlasting* (so the NIV and ESV) and *from eternity to eternity* (so

the JPS Tanakh), also good renderings, replicate the Hebrew words more closely.

The Septuagint translates מִן־הָעוֹלָם עַד־הָעוֹלָם literally as ἀπὸ. τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ. ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος. Elsewhere the Septuagint, as well as the New Testament, contains the similar expression εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων (cf., e.g., Ps 83:5; Rev 1:18).

In Daniel 7:18 (which is in Aramaic but resembles the Hebrew we're dealing with), we find the grand expression עָלַם עָלְמַיָּא עַד־עָלְמָא וְעַד, where the word עָלַם, "eternity, forever," occurs three times in a row!

The preceding examples help us to see that when we translate מִן־הָעוֹלָם עַד־הָעוֹלָם into another language (the "target language," which in our case is English), we want to replicate the sense of the Hebrew as best we can. The way to do this may differ from language to language and from one historical period to another.

In some instances, a literal translation will give us stylistically felicitous English that communicates the meaning of the Hebrew well; in other instances we will need to translate with more so-called dynamic equivalence (i.e., concept-for-concept translation, as opposed to word-for-word translation).

Suppose we were writing an exegesis of Neh 9:5. We might discover that a slightly different translation, such as "from ancient times to eternity," better captures the nuances of the phrase מִן־הָעוֹלָם עַד־הָעוֹלָם here. Or perhaps we would not.

Keep in mind that context – immediate context to ever-broader context: for example,

- Neh 9:5
    - Nehemiah 9
        - the book of Nehemiah
            - the Old Testament
            - the entire Bible

– tells us how best to translate a word, phrase, or sentence in any given text.

Final Translation

forever and ever

    or

from eternity to eternity

    or

from everlasting to everlasting